

# u3a ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group Members

This will be sent out prior to the end of the month as I am away again in Devon, and in case there are last minute bookings for our next tasting event (see later in this newsletter).

I was very sorry to have missed Carol Avery's tasting on Volcanic Wines and from what I have heard, another excellent selection of wines and information from her. I have copied her full presentation for those who are interested in keeping it, and for those who could not attend, as below.

I have put names besides tastings held at the Arts Centre where we need food purchased and served, as per the rota previously mailed round. Should you not be able to do the particular month, please let me know and I will find someone else from the list, and let me know which month you could do, thank you so much.

## **Review of Carol Avery's Volcanic Wines, took place 12<sup>th</sup> April at Pentewan.**

Carol's full presentation follows and some photos Sue Osbrink kindly took. The wines certainly are interesting, especially taking into account the volcanic terroir in which they thrive. Having read Carol's very thorough and informative presentation, you must all be experts in volcanic soil and style of wines now!



“Thanks for joining me again for another Wine with Carol evening! I love coming to speak to this particular group because I know you are genuinely enthusiastic about the subject. I've changed the format of our evening tonight and whilst you have been settling down for the evening you have had some wine in your glass to set the mood. Many thanks to Marie who is helping once again with the pouring and has made a small treat for later! Big thanks also to Amanda who cannot be here but has been in regular touch to sort out all the details for tonight and sends you her good wishes for a fun time, and to Shirley who kindly helped me set up this afternoon. We are going to visit various areas of the world where

volcanos are famously known to exist either now or in the past. We've all studied Volcanos at school and this is the adult content class!

There are over 1,300 volcanos on Earth that are still considered active! Mostly our interaction with this often dangerous and volatile environment is via the news. They are not obvious agricultural sites even for a plant as robust as a grapevine. Thankfully for those who harvest the wines not all volcanic wines are found today on the side of an erupting volcano and the wine may have been made from vines grown in volcanic sites which last erupted millions of years ago.



So you have in your glass, **The Society's Exhibition Santorini Assyrtiko PDO 2021 13% Greece. £17.50 The Wine Society** Santorini Assyrtikos have occasionally been referred to as shocking! It was not my intention to cause that reaction and we will talk about the wine structure in a moment.

Assyrtiko is a native Greek Grape which covers 75% of the island. The quality of Greek wine has improved a lot in recent years and it

won't be too difficult for you to find bottles of Assyrtiko if you like the taste of it tonight. Assyrtiko wine can also be found in the Corinth Area and the Nemea Valley on the Greek mainland. It's available in wine merchants at a price varying from £9 to £25! This one was £17. I tried a few Assyrtikos from the mainland but I wanted to showcase a wine that is from a true volcano island as some of the others have vines (or winemakers!) which have been moved from Santorini so badged as, but in my view, are not purely volcanic. Who has been to Santorini? (We had a short discussion of those who had and over tourism was mentioned) Even if you haven't you will have seen pictures of the whitewashed buildings with blue roofs from postcards perched on a true black volcanic outcrop in the southern Aegean. The grapes are grown on low circular basket shaped vines and the soil is referred to as Aspa - a mixture of volcanic ash, basalt, sand and pumice. Harvesting begins in early August, prompted by the hot, dry conditions. The volcanic soils are thought to accentuate minerality, even salinity in the fruit and at the winery they are sorted to select the best, healthiest grapes. When we think about the size of Santorini (It takes only 45 minutes to drive from one end to the other) it is size delimited in terms of what can be produced. So that is one of the influences on the higher price point of the finished wine. Indeed wineries face a challenge from over tourism encroaching on them. Additionally the island has hardly any water so yields are very low due to the water scarcity.

Tonight's wine is a 2021 from the Wine Society. I am not sure if anyone else here is a member? Lifetime membership is £40 with £20 of that which can be spent on wine and there is no charge for postage even for one bottle. I'm not on any kind of commission but do recommend the Wine Society as a provider of quality wines. This particular one is part of their Exhibition Range. It was named after the Earls Court exhibition of 1836. The Exhibition series is chosen to exhibit typical flavours of a particular grape. Majestic also have a Definition range. Both ranges focus on what a typical wine of that grape should be like.

So typically wines from Santorini do not smell very aromatic but let's have a quick shout out of what you found in the taste of this

one - Lemons, minerals, lime?... The wine buyer described it as 'classic citrus, sea-breeze freshness'. It's 13% ABV and unoaked. Aysyrtiko particularly has been described as one of the best demonstrators of minerality and exhibiting a savoury quality and mouthfeel. I think the savoury quality is well demonstrated in this particular wine.



The grape maintains its acidity at ripeness, an intensity of acidity which could be described as racy. It's crisp and clean. Mist from the Aegean can give it saline nuances. An Assyrtiko from the mainland might show more fruity characteristics while the Santorini may show more mineral qualities. When examining the chemical structure of Assyrtiko grapes there is a high presence of Sodium (especially in the Santorini version) and of Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium, Manganese, Zinc and to a lesser extent Iron along with very small amounts of Copper in the Santorini version. These chemicals can enhance the wines profile and lead to what has been described by some as salty sweetness and the differing chemical levels explain why the Assyrtikos vary in taste. As you have hopefully discovered. it is improved with food and the acidity makes the wines

very food friendly as it refreshes the palate. I'm a fan of the Apprentice programme. I'm not going to put myself up for Hiring or Firing but please hold up a volcano card if you like this wine. (We had a vote on the wine and it was very well liked by the members)

An advantage of volcanic soils is that they are known as suitable for cultivating phylloxera-resistant vines. I am sure that you will have heard of Phylloxera before. However a quick recap...

It is a small 1mm aphid and was discovered in France in 1847 having believed to have come from America. Feeding on the sap of the roots it destroyed millions of acres of vineyards. It was spread through the plant hunters of the time and more locally on machinery or the wind. The French Government were understandably concerned and initiated a competition to find a cure. One suggestion was to bury a living toad under the vine and another to feed the vines white wine! Flooding the vineyards was another suggestion and was partially successful and due to the availability of snowmelt is still used in Argentina. The East Coast American vines from where the pest came developed some resistance to the aphid so a solution was found that grafting European vines onto resistant American rootstock which is how many of today's vines are propagated. However, the lack of clay in volcanic soil means that vines are immune to phylloxera. Therefore many of the vines on Santorini are old. Phylloxera does not survive at high altitudes. And of course many volcanos are high...

The vines from which this wine is made average 50 years old... or perhaps we don't want to think of 50 years as old! That's where I stop telling you all of what I think you might be tasting in your glass for now!

We are going to continue travelling and evaluate the next white, two reds and I'll let you relax completely for the final desert wine! It has not been as easy as I hoped to source the wines tonight and my husband has 'suffered' several tastings with me prior to tonight! I'll be handing out 'You have tasted..' sheets at the end as normal.



So what exactly make soil volcanic? Essentially its soil that formed from parent volcanic material. This includes everything from lava in all of its forms. I've actually got a piece of igneous rock to show you - a large piece of obsidian those here that I picked up at Ascension Island! You can actually see where the molten lava has quickly cooled. Not many people get to go to that island but it's the RAF refuelling stop on the way to the Falklands. On the first occasion I spent 2 weeks leading a scuba diving expedition there and apart from swimming with turtles and dolphins I liberated this before some locations such as the canary islands introduced fines for acquiring foreshore items! I've also got a piece of Scoria. The little holes are from where gas was present when it was ejected from the Volcano. This one is from Lanzarote. The test tube here is from Vesuvius.

So...volcanic soil can be made from a variety of different fragments expelled from a volcano vent as well as volcanic alluvium that settled in valleys. Volcanic soils make up only 1% of the world's surface. Vineyards in volcanic areas are often situated on remote and rugged terrain means that mechanisation is often not possible forcing work to be done by hand resulting in wines which are both interesting and made with care. Volcanic soils typically lean towards infertile unless they contain the highly fertile ash and unlike other soil types because of the stoniness they don't hold or retain water. You can imagine that the vine roots have to dig deeper in search of a better water supply because of the rocky surface. Therefore because the vines have to work harder that may influence the final wines. The harsh conditions of vines grappling for water and nutrients through the rocky soil make the grapes smaller and the skins thicker. So whilst they offer a lower yield, happily these enable the grapes to offer the winemaker the opportunity to give a greater structure to the wine and impart a richer flavour. Understandably there is also less water relative to the other molecules in each grape. So the flavours are more concentrated. This means that the acidity also gets concentrated and in cooler volcanic climates you can get a possibly unrivalled concentration of acidic compounds and mineral flavours.

Let's move on to wine 2...

### **Vesuvium Greco di Tufo Laithwaites DOCG 2022 £13.99 13%**

So we are now in Italy. This is from the Italian mainland in Campania near Naples and named after the famous volcano Mount Vesuvius.

I'll let you have some time to taste and evaluate it on your sheets.

*What did you notice in the wine?*

It's made purely from Greco wine and it is described as bright straw yellow and intense fresh fruit and floral aromas. The palate is medium bodied with notes of white stone fruits, green apples, pears, almonds and white blossom.

*Who thinks they can taste an underlying minerality? Great - that's the feature that I most wanted to evaluate during our tasting research together. Minerality itself is much debated. Benjamin Spencer a wine writer wrote that volcanic soils can contribute to an exciting tension, edginess and savoury quality to the wines they*



produce. We often refer to this as minerality but what do we mean by this? Certain compounds have a direct relation to the wine in your glass (e.g. Sauvignon and Green peppers and Shiraz and Black peppercorns can be measured to the same compounds in both the wine and the food item!) However, minerality can be regarded as more of a metaphorical mineral sensation. We don't literally lick this rock to replicate what we think it is. I'm happy with what I think it is. It was in fact my first moment that wine was something to be more interested in at my first wine tasting when I tasted what I felt was minerality in a New Zealand Sauvignon blanc. I think it is best explained as a metaphorical feeling represented by actual minerals (salts and bitter tastes along with trace metals) hopefully presented in some harmony in the glass!

The Campania regions climate is ideal for cultivating vines. At 500m high and with cooling sea breezes, the grapes here can be among the last harvested in Italy. Poor volcanic soils means yields are kept low.

*Can I have a show of hand for those who have visited the Canaries?* I would have liked to include a wine from there tonight but I could not find an importer and those bottles already in the country have a price tag of £29 + for relatively standard quality wines. However in discussing Volcanic wines it's worth mentioning that they are another of the phylloxera free places in the world to have ungrafted *Vitis Vinifera* (the common European grapevine) some over 200 years old and many grape varieties that are unique to the islands.

The excellent drainage makes them less susceptible to Phylloxera as the Phylloxera bug cannot survive in pure ash either. What's really interesting to see if you're ever in Lanzarote is the vines growing in pits containing thick layers of a volcanic ash. (A number of members had seen these). These are surrounded by protective lava stone walls that shield grapes from the hot North African wind and sun and trap scarce moisture carried over by the Atlantic trade winds in an otherwise very dry climate.

I'm passing around a couple of photos from my visit to the wineries there. It's taken in February and bud burst has not quite happened.

It demonstrates the hardiness of vines. I can recommend a visit and trying the wine if you get chance.

So lets hop across to the island of Sicily and explore some of Mount Etna.

### **Rosso Sicilia Riserva DOC 2020 13.5% Asda £7.75**

I'm pleased to be presenting this red from a supermarket. Most supermarkets have Masters of Wine working for them and there is definately some quality wine to be had at reasonable prices.

*Lets evaluate this wine:*

What did you notice?

The grape is not specified but the spy in me has worked it out to be Nerello Macalese. It is partly aged in French Oak so some of the wine will have been in stainless steel (which of course imparts no additional flavours to the wine) and some in oak (which is more expensive) and then the final wine will be blended and left to mature in the bottle for 12 months before release.

Etna has been referred to as the 'poster child' of Volcanic wine and its unique status as the highest active volcano in Europe, with its sheer 3300-metre majesty and lava flows running within sight of vineyards, gives it a unique romance. Wine is no small business here. The hectarage under vines is similar to the whole of South Africa or Germany! The area is very much on the up still and currently has 200 wineries! At 1200 metres high the highest vineyards are the highest in Italy and amongst the highest in the world.

The large stones make the soil is extremely hard to work and fast-draining, yielding more powerful red wines. In lower, more eroded areas, the lava decomposes into a fine, sandy, extremely fertile ash, considered better for white and rosé wines.

Brennan Quigley a geologist says that the connections between soil type and wine aromas and flavours are complex. "It seems like the sites that express distinct, smoky aromas are on or very near to a truly active volcano," she says. It's even possible there's some remnant of volcanic ash in the air or within the soil that gets incorporated into the wine. I can't disagree with this as grapes are rarely washed before they are made into wine.

It's my view that altitude and the slopes orientation to the sun also influence the final wine in your glass. The Denominazione di Origine Controllata or DOC is actually height limited so anything produced above 1000 meters cannot use the appellation! So this is a DOC wine will have been produced below that.

At this point I feel I should make a brief opposing argument for the minerality we may find in Volcanic wines. I'm a fan of the Tim Atkin's Cork Talks. They are free and about 40 minutes long so perfect to listen to whilst cooking dinner! There is one by Professor Alex Maltman a Welsh Geologist. His opinion is that there is no way that stones can influence a plant and that the term minerality has no scientific basis. I can agree that rocks themselves would find it difficult to impart their flavours to plants as per my large lava rock. However I feel that fragments of rocks which make up soil can do. Moreover the texture of the soil (test-tube sample) will have a lot of influence as to how the soil drains as we have already mentioned. Most of us who have grown produce at some point can think that for example growing tomatoes in poor soil is going to influence the final result. Soil type (for example ericaceous soil for blue hydrangeas) has a large bearing on the finished result! So I leave those thoughts there for you to ponder...

The next Red is a prequel for next years' possible topic. I'm off to Chile in November.

**Bodega Volcanes de Chile - Carmenare 2022 Majestic £11.99**  
Wine - evaluation sheet...

It is described as deep violet red colour intense aromas of Red and black fruits, berries, black pepper and olives dark fruit flavours, smokey and rich, bitter chocolate and black pepper and spice notes, herbs, olives, toast, tobacco and earth! Full bodied with elegant and gentle tannins. 85% Carménère and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cabernet Sauvignon will give added structure, acidity, tannins and aging potential to the wine.

So this wine is a Denominaciones de Origen DO wine from the Rapel Valley which is part of the greater Central Valley. It comes from fine textured granitic soil. Bodegas Volcanes de Chile is a fairly new winery, founded in 2009, that focuses on making wines on Chile's volcanic soils.

I'll quote from Pilar Díaz who is the lady who is the Head Winemaker at Bodega Volcanes de Chile:

'Our wines come from vineyards that contain volcanic soils and our aim is to ensure all our products reflect the unique minerality of each site and the landscape. Chile has over 2,900 volcanos and our vineyards are located in different valleys across the country with deeper sub-soils rich in volcanic matter which help the vine withstand high temperatures, retain humidity and offer good drainage. For us the volcanic character is an attribute which makes our wines more vibrant and richer with greater complexity in aromas and on the palate. Our philosophy is to produce wines which reflect this unique and carefully studied origin and display the purity of the grape varieties without excessive use of oak.'

The grapes used to produce this wine come predominantly from our own vineyard in Maule, and also from long-term growers with whom we have been working in previous vintages that are located in the Rapel Valley. The Maule estate soils have high presence of volcanic igneous rocks. (Exhibit A!) The average temperatures in the summer months vary between a minimum of 10°C and a maximum of 32 degrees C. Loamy clay in texture, the soils have high minerality, medium fertility and good drainage. This great daily temperature variation promotes a slow ripening and the correct development of the tannins.

When I was researching the wines I wanted tonight I wanted to present a selection of colours and 'finishes'. I would have ideally chosen something with more tannins in as the final red to balance the flight. However the more I looked at Volcanic areas from New Zealand to California the reds were often Pinot Noirs which as you know is a lighter red. Fortunately I struck upon a Tim Atkin cork talk with an Italian winemaker based near Vesuvius which explained my puzzle. So as we know Volcanoes are erupting mountains of some height and the grapes grown in these places are at the highest altitudes of wine growing. Typically they will have colder weather at height and so a later harvesting season. Therefore the grapes will retain their acidity and will not be the full on sun scorched grapes that we would find for example in the Barossa Valley in Australia. It makes a lot of sense to me about 'Terroir' and why we don't find highly oaked reds with really deep tannins in this kind of environment.

To finish we are off to Hungary.

**Disznókó Tokaji 1413 Edes Szamorodni Waitrose £21.99  
12.73%**

This is a wine of such renown that 'the grape fields of Tokaj' are even mentioned in the Hungarian national anthem! This is from the North East of Hungary and Disznoko is the renowned producer. Wines from the village of Tokaj are spelt as that with an i added to form the adjectival 'from the region of'. There may not be an obvious volcano in sight but much of Hungary's topography is the result of violent volcanic activity. This area was slow to recover from Phylloxera and under Russian rule quantity was preferred over quality. The Volcanic clays are particularly thin at altitude. Humid nights and the rivers favour the botrytized shrivelled on the vine style.

Taste...

Pale golden. Broad, silky and creamy with a wonderful nose of peach & tropical fruits. Apricot notes appear with citrus in the mouth. Anything else noticed?

Very smooth Aszú grapes give a lower acidity than we might expect. Ready to drink from the moment it is bottled. Thanks to the barrel ageing, it will develop in complexity during the next 10-15 years. Indeed it is suggested that most Volcanic wines can be aged successfully perhaps due to the sulphur and volcanic gases in the soil. (To enjoy to its fullest serve cool 11- 13°C)

Smzamorodini means 'as it comes' so rather than individual pickings of Aszu when there is less than 50% botrytized then all the remaining grapes will be picked. It is typically sweet as the sugar content in the grapes is so high that it will not ferment fully dry.

Alcohol: 12.73%

Suggested to be excellent with sea-fish dishes made with creamy sauce and lemon and not so sweet desserts (chocolate hopefully), fruits and cheeses.

Thanks for your attention tonight. It's taken me a lot of research over a year but as always an interesting education for me as well. I hope that I have given you some insights on wines from Volcanic areas. You've had the first rendition of this years 'Wine with Carol' on this topic! and any feedback of any kind but especially about the technical content is welcome.

So what of the conclusions though in terms of the influence of Volcanic matter in wines? We have thought about whether a soil (and it's composition and density) and other conditions such as height, weather and location in volcanic areas can influence the flavour of a wine. So 'sense of place' or terroir in it's wider context. We've experienced acidity, and perhaps some mineral flavours. Let's have a final vote and If you think that Volcanos have influenced the wine in your glass tonight please hold one of the Volcano cards.

It's a YES from the U3A Wine Appreciation Society!

**Wine with Carol - Volcanic wines 12 April 2024, Pentewan Sands Sailing Club.** You have tasted:

White: The Society's Exhibition Santorini Assyrtiko PDO 2021 13% Greece

£17.50 The Wine Society

White: Vesuvium Greco di Tufo DOCG 2022 13% Italy £13.99 Laithwaites

Red: Rosso Sicilia Riserva DOC 2020 13.5% Italy £7.75 Asda

Red: Volcanes Carmenere 2022 Central Valley 14% Chile £11.99 Majestic

Desert: Disznókó Tokaji 1413 Edes Szamorodni 2021 12.5% Hungary £16.49

(500ml) Waitrose

Carol I am dizzy with facts about volcanic wines and thank you so very much for all the research you have done, to give our group what I believe to be a unique tasting.



## NOTE VENUE CHANGE

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May Old Chapel Cellars wine merchant, comes to The Arts Centre. (and not in Truro).**

**We have always enjoyed humorous and very informative tastings with Louisa. New bookings required by May 2<sup>nd</sup> latest please!**

Arrival for 6.30pm start, to finish at 9.30pm with time to make purchases as Louisa will take orders on the evening for delivery. Cost is **£30pp** ref WGMAY24.

On this visit Louisa will present the topic **Grape Varietals....**

“We will taste a total of **7 wines**. We will look at a pair of rose wines that are the same grape but with a different name because they are from different countries. A French Grenache and a Spanish Rosado.

Then we will look at the Tempranillo grape and how even though we know as a red grape there is also a Tempranillo Blanco. We will try the white first and then a young, and then an aged Tempranillo red.

Then we will do a pair of reds that are the same grape Pinot Noir, but with a different name.”

Wow that sounds a really great tasting – 7 wines with usual cheeses etc

Any further bookings required by 2<sup>nd</sup> May ref WGMAY and let Sue Osbrink know asap.

Elaine Nelson has very kindly agreed to buy the bread and biscuits, we need please someone to buy and serve the cheeses and grapes.

### **June Garden Party, Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June at 4 Tremena Road, St Austell from 12noon going through the afternoon**

This is a most popular event held every Summer in the beautiful secluded garden of Chris and Karen Scott's home. A sloping garden with steps or a steep slope to access and many levels of fragrant garden to spread yourselves amongst. **This event is free**, and a wonderful occasion for socialising and getting to know other members.

Just bring a large platter ready to present, of sharing picnic style finger food (no salads as too tricky sharing) plus a bottle or two of wine, which will all be shared and laid out in the Dining Room (food) and Utility Room (wines).

**The Wine Group will buy some fizz so that everyone attending can have a glass to set the afternoon off with a “bang”!**

Sue Osbrink will kindly coordinate the food so that we do not have dozens of one item and sufficient vegetarian items – you can bring savoury, sweet/desserts, cheeses & biscuits/breads, but please ensure you bring a generous platter especially if you are coming as a couple. There is always a generous feast of food and wines.



We may well also have The Garker Street Band playing for a while, a wonderful local group with amazing sax player and singer(s) who do not charge a penny, instead raising money by donations for the Fowey RNLI such a deserving local cause. SO PLEASE bring some money, preferably notes! Also please bring your own tasting glass.

Email Sue to confirm your attendance and suggest what food you will bring – and Sue can let you know whether that is suitable.

*As in the past couple of years, we need some volunteers to help Karen with the garden on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> just to prep it for the garden party, cutting grass, brushing leaves, and similar. I would hope that some who have not volunteered in the past would give an hour or two of their time. Suggest 2pm there. Thank you so much.*

## **12<sup>th</sup> July at Ellis Wharton Wines, Indian Queens**

**“Mediterranean Wines without France and Spain (but quick drop into Alicante!)”**

**Arrival/start at 6.30pm and due to finish around 9pm** with time after for everyone to browse their shop (not only wines and spirits but some excellent food items/gifts too). The Minibus will depart at 9.30pm back to St Austell. **Cost tasting £30pp. Minibus cost £14.50**

Another of our great local wine suppliers, Ellis Wharton have always given us tastings to remember for not only the interesting selection of wines, but the amazing spread of food. Without doubt every member who has attended has commented what a wonderful evening they enjoyed, plus of course, many return to the bus with a box full of purchases.

This time Jim, helped by Victoria, will present “**Mediterranean Wines without France or Spain**”. “You will be visiting and tasting wines from Italy Greece and a boutique producer in Alicante, Spain. The line-up will include 2 whites, a rose, an orange wine and 2 reds. This will all be accompanied by cheese, meats, Da Bara

focaccia and more foodie bits on the table.” This has all the components of an interesting and tasty tasting, can’t wait.

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August, St Austell Arts Centre 6.45pm start, finish by 9.30/9.45pm with taxis at 10pm. Kate McBurnie from Cornish Wine Tasting, presenting World Wines £30pp to include room booking fee and food. Bookings by 7<sup>th</sup> July latest ref WGAUG.**

“Join Kate from “Cornish Wine tasting” as she hosts an evening of wines from around the World. Be taken on a journey of discovery, uncovering some lesser known grape varieties and unique wine regions. Perhaps you may discover something you’ve never tried before and learn a thing or two along the way!” 6 wines to taste with food (prepared and bought by Chris & Chrissie Wright).

A new presenter to our Wine Group, so looking forward to meeting her.

**20<sup>th</sup> September, St Austell Arts Centre 6.45pm start, finish by 9.30/9.45pm with time to purchase wines on the night. Taxis 10pm. Sebastien from Wadebridge Wines to present Wines of New Zealand. £28pp to include 6 wines and food, (prepared and bought by Judith Newell). Booking and payment by end August, ref WGSEPT.**

Another visit from the very French and very knowledgeable Sebastien.

“We will remind ourselves of New Zealand’s main wine producing regions, their specialities and taste some exquisite examples of the country’s finest wines”.

The lovely Sebastien will join us again for a charming tasting of 6 wines, and this year will bring a supply of wines with him to purchase on the night.

Information on events for the remainder of the year will appear in subsequent newsletters. I am finalising a trip to Johns in Fowey,

postponed from February for November, further information to follow.

Remember: When paying for any events, your reference should be your membership number(s) followed by WG and the month eg xxxxWGFeb.

**PAYMENTS TO THE WINE GROUP ACCOUNT PAY INTO  
ACCOUNT NO 23132587 (Barclays Bank)  
SORT CODE 20-30-47 (U3a St Austell )**

## **Wine Info**

### **Frosts to return**

Lighting a candle can be a special, intimate moment. We remember the dead in the corner of a magnificent cathedral; we gaze into our partner's eyes over a bottle of wine; we sit with friends on a summer night, staring up into the salt and pepper of the stars.

But for winemakers right now, candles have a different meaning. Social Media has been full of atmospheric night-time images whose truth is as ugly as the images are beautiful. Late spring frosts are back in Europe, stalking vineyards across the continent. Parts of France recorded their lowest April temperatures since 1947. In Spain, too, it has been a scary time.

We don't know how extensive the damage will be – this is just after another sub-zero night in several important wine regions – but fingers crossed that it won't be as bad as it was in 2017 or 2021. The vines seem less advanced this year, which is an advantage.

Peter Sisseck of Dominio de Pingus in Ribera del Duero posted on Instagram that he and his team of ten people had lit (and extinguished) 4,500 candles two nights running, working from 1am to 9am in freezing conditions to protect his vines in La Horra. We sometimes talk of heroic viticulture in steep, thigh-testing vineyards. But that seems a trifle glib to me. Fighting the elements, as many producers are doing this week, is true valour.

## **How to choose wine** (from “*Unraveling Wine*” a Sommelier currently living in Crete)

Shopping for wine is one of my favourite hobbies. I love perusing the aisles of my local wine shop in pursuit of the perfect bottle to have for dinner. Better yet, finding a bottle of wine I’ve never seen or had before. But since it’s my hobby and I’m a wine geek, I’ve got really good at it. Choosing a bottle of wine is easy and enjoyable to me. However, after a survey of my readers, choosing the right wine is the single most difficult part of being a wine drinker. Fear not! You do not need to be a wine expert to find a good bottle of wine. I spent years in wine retail and know just how to help. Here are my tips and tricks on how to choose wine and get the perfect wine for any occasion. At the very least, you’ll know what never to buy again.

### **How to ask for help at a wine shop**

The best advice I can give it to find a local wine shop and make friends. Don’t be shy! Ask for help! Find the person at the shop that you feel comfortable with and have them guide you. These are the questions they’ll likely ask you to help you choose the right wine.

### **Is this wine for you or a gift?**

This seems like an odd question but there’s a method to the madness. If a wine is a gift, the wine recommendation will change depending on who it is for. For example, if it’s for your boss, you’ll want a wine with name recognition to impress them with your amazing selection. You’re not going to buy the same wine for your college-aged nephew. If it’s for a wine geek friend, you may want to get them something obscure and weird.

### **Are you drinking this wine with food?**

If you’re going to have the wine with food the wine shop person can help you find a good match. I used to say, Old World with food and New World without. Old World wines are wines from Europe and the Middle East where culturally one would never think of drinking wine without food. They tend to be a bit higher in acidity and are intended to be drunk with a meal. If you’re not planning on eating and are just going to be sipping on a wine while watching a movie, head over to the New World section that will have wines from the US, Argentina, Australia, or New Zealand. While these wines are definitely suitable for drinking with a meal, they tend to be a little more fruit-forward and easy to drink on their own.

## What do you usually drink?

If you tell me you usually drink Malbec, Syrah, and Zinfandel, I have a pretty good idea of your palate because these wines are all bold spicy reds. A wine shop will discern the same thing and won't steer you to a Pinot Noir but might introduce you to a Monastrell from Spain.

## What's your budget?

This is pretty self explanatory. Be clear with your budget. Don't be shy to say that you want to spend under £15. It's not like the wine merchant is rolling in money and only drinking themselves 1st growth Bordeauxs. More on budget later.

## Another tip for how to choose the perfect wine

If you have these questions ready, they should be able to guide you to the right wine for the occasion . Feeling adventurous? Ask *them* a question. **What wine are you currently excited about?** Most wine merchants will gleefully bring you to the latest and greatest wine in their shop.

Buy a few bottles that the person recommends. When you try them, take notes and take a picture of the bottle. Identify what you like and don't like about the wine. The next time you go in to that wine shop, find the same person and tell them what you thought. From this information they should be able to glean exactly what it is you like and make even better recommendations.

**BONUS TIP:** Ask them if they ever do in-store wine tastings. The small boutique wine shop I worked at in Chicago had a weekly wine tasting every Friday night. It was a great way to taste different wines every week.

## How to choose wine at a supermarket

Sometimes there's someone in the wine department of supermarket, but most of the time you're stuck looking at a daunting wall of bottles alone. If there isn't someone to help you, keep reading for more tips to help you choose a wine.

According to my readers, they usually shop by grape variety. I've created this cheat sheet to help you choose wine by style and food pairing. You can try other wines in the category you already know you're comfortable with. I had someone ask me, okay, great, I'm having fettucine alfredo, the best pairing is a California Chardonnay, now what? Well now you have to decide budget.

## Understanding wine prices

Our budget for wine is usually the single biggest contributing factor to what wine we will choose. If money was no object, shopping for wine would be super easy, wouldn't it? I'm going to give it to you as straight as possible. You may not like it but it's the truth. **Cheap wine is cheap for a reason.** Anything under £5 is going to be mass-produced, chemically-infested, exploitative of the environment, and exploitative of the labour force. If that's as far as your budget reaches, I understand, I've been there and that's okay.

Often the cheap wines are the wines that are stacked 3 cases deep with lots of signage telling you how great they are. They're usually not great at all and taste hollow with aromas of bruised fruit. Large wine companies literally buy that space on the floor of the supermarket.

### A little rant about bulk wine

But how do I know if it's a small wine producer? Unfortunately, you won't. The large wine conglomerates account for over 70% of the wines in supermarket. What's worse is they're gobbling up small wineries from around the world left and right. If your budget is £5-6, avoid the stacks and go to the shelves and you'll likely find a small producer cowering on the bottom shelf. Spain, Chile, Portugal, and Argentina will often be where values will be found. That being said, they still might be mass-produced. Not all wines made by these conglomerates will be obvious to you. If it's important to you to buy wine from small-family owned wineries, you'll have to go to **a small independent wine shop** and up your budget by a few ££.

### Check the vintage

If you're buying a bottle of white or rose, double check you're buying a fresh wine. If you see a huge display of white wine on sale it may mean the wine may have gone past its peak.

### Trial and Error

Sometimes it's a lottery. You're going to buy wines that you don't love. While that isn't great, use it as a learning opportunity. Was the wine too light? Too acidic? Too tannic? See if you can identify why you didn't like it and avoid that next time.

In conclusion, you have to take risks or you'll never find the wines you like. You don't have to do it alone. Organize [a wine tasting with your friends](#) where everyone brings a different bottle. Take notes and take a picture of everything you like. At the wine shop, don't be afraid to ask questions. Get on their email list and see when they're having a tasting so you can try before you buy.

Well as much as we all think we know about buying wine, hopefully there may be one or two things in this article that you find useful. A useful sheet is below which you may wish to print out and keep as an aide memoire.

**Couple of Decanter wine recommendations** (from supermarkets or the Wine Society)

**Lidl, Cepa Lebrel Crianza, Rioja, Spain 2021 £5.75 14%**

Only available in store, this value Crianza is worth picking up on your next visit. Spicy and slightly smoky with tangy red fruits and some darker blackberry in the background and reasonable intensity. A good option to enjoy with food.

**Cambalala, Sauvignon Blance, Western Cape, South Africa 2023, Aldi £7.99 12.5%**

This comes in an impossibly light bottle made from 94% recycled paper with a carbon footprint 6 times lower than a standard bottle! Blended with 15% Colombard it is not the same as Cambalala's varietal 2023 Sauvignon Blanc in glass. Gentle passion fruit tones and fresh acidity tick the boxes.

**Jacques Depagneux, Generation Series Macon-Villages, Burgundy France 2022, £16.50 The Wine Society 13%**

An elegant and great value expression of the lovely 2022 vintage. Nuanced and alluring nose, delicate floral notes mingling with yellow apple, toasted almonds and preserved lemons. Deft use of oak adds structural complexity.

# GRAPE VARIETIES CHEAT SHEET FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT WINE

## FRUITY REDS

These are medium to full-bodied reds with lots of fruit aromas like plums, berries, dark fruits, currants, and jam. These varieties will have tannins and a velvety mouthfeel.

**Food Pairing:** tri-tip, prime rib, porterhouse, wild boar, burgers, and strong cheeses.

- Cabernet Sauvignon- California, Chile, Bordeaux
- Merlot- Washington, California, Chile, Bordeaux
- Mourvedre/Monastrell- Jumilla, Bandal
- Tannat- Madiran, Uruguay
- Shiraz- Australia, South Africa
- Barbera- Italy (Alba, Asti)

## BOLD & SPICY REDS

Bold and spicy reds will have peppery, cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg smells with fruity flavors like cherries and strawberries, and raspberries.

**Food Pairing:** grilled steaks, lamb, pork roast, and stinky cheeses.

- Malbec- Medonza (Argentina), Cahors (France)
- Tempranillo- Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Portugal
- Grenache/Garnacha- Rhone Valley, Rioja, Priorat
- Nebbiolo- Barolo, Barbaresco
- Syrah- Rhone Valley
- Zinfandel/Primitivo- California, Apulia, Croatia
- Carmenere- Chile

## LIGHT & EARTHY REDS

Light and earthy reds will have aromas and flavors like fall leaves, mushroom, and also bright cherries, and berries.

**Food Pairing:** chicken, Bolognese, turkey, and mushroom dishes.

- Pinot Noir- Burgundy, New Zealand, Oregon
- Sangiovese- Chianti
- Gamay- Beaujolais
- Cabernet Franc- Chinon, Bordeaux, Hungary
- Cinsault- France, Northern Africa, Lebanon
- Blaufrankisch- Hungary, Austria, Germany
- Carignan- Southern France, Northern Africa

## ROSÉ

Rosé is made with red grapes. To make rose the winemaker limits the contact with the grape skins so only a little bit of color is extracted. Rose is traditional a dry wine.

**Food Pairing:** charcuterie, salmon, tuna, salads, grilled vegetables.

## HOW TO USE THIS CHART

This is a cheat sheet intended to give the most basic information. The grapes are divided by their main style as well as the main regions in which they grow. This is to help you find a wine that may be labeled by region instead of grape.

Fold it up and stick it in your wallet for easy access while you're shopping for wine.

## AROMATIC WHITES

Aromatic whites are defined by their perfumed aromatics of white flowers, apricots, roses, and peaches.

**Food Pairing:** delicate dishes and spicy dishes like white fish, chicken salad, Thai food, and Indian food.

- Torrontes- Argentina
- Muscat/Moscato- Italy, Greece
- Gewurztraminer- Alsace
- Chenin Blanc- Loire Valley, South Africa
- Moschofilero- Greece

## CITRUSY CRISP WHITES

These grapes are known for their bright acidity and citrus aromas like lemon, lime, and grapefruit. You may also smell grassy, herbal, and stone fruit aromas.

**Food Pairing:** seafood/shellfish, sushi, sautéed greens, lemon-based dishes.

- Pinot Grigio/Pinot Gris- Italy, Alsace, Oregon
- Sauvignon Blanc- New Zealand, Loire, Bordeaux
- Riesling- Germany, Alsace, Washington
- Albarino/Alvarihno- Spain, Portugal
- Assyrtiko- Greece
- Gruner Veltliner- Austria

## FULL CREAMY WHITES

White grapes become full-bodied and creamy during the wine making process and ageing in oak barrels. Oaked whites smell like vanilla, butter, and spice.

**Food Pairing:** Cream sauces, lobster, salmon, pork, even red meat.

- Chardonnay- Burgundy, California, Australia
- Viognier- Rhone Valley, California, Virginia
- Roussanne- Rhone Valley
- Viura- Spain
- Grenache Blanc- France, Spain

## SPARKLING WINE

Sparkling wine is made with by a second fermentation, either in the bottle or in the tank. They can range from dry to sweet.

**Food Pairing:** Sparkling wine is very versatile and can match almost every kind of food.

- Champagne- France (Traditional Method)
- Cava- Spain (Traditional Method)
- Prosecco- Italy (Tank Method)
- Sekt- Germany (Tank Method)
- Moscato d'Asti- Italy (Tank Method)



## **Rotas for Jobs**

I would like to thank everyone who have put themselves forwards to do various jobs required in running our successful wine tasting evening, at the Arts Centre. I have put a rota together including names who also have volunteered to help in general for any job, so that if you are unable to attend a particular meeting but your name is down, we can approach one of the other members. I hope this is acceptable to everyone, and we can be flexible about which meeting you do the job. As always if anyone can arrive slightly earlier to assist in putting up tables and chairs and helping lay tables, that is also a great help.

## **FOOD**

August	Chris & Chrissie Wright
September	Judith Newell
October	Elaine Burgess
November	probable visit to Fowey
December	Christmas event (may need help)

## **WASHING TABLECLOTHS**

August	Ann Harper
September	Elaine Burgess
October	Ann Smith
November	probable visit to Fowey
December	Christmas event (may need help)

## **RUBBISH & BOTTLES**

Chris Timmins has kindly managed to persuade the Arts Centre to allow us to use their recycling facilities. So if I could ask Elaine Nelson and Mike Edwardes to kindly bring a couple of bin liners to each meeting, we can put waste into one and bottles another, and then into the bins provided.

The following members have kindly offered to help as and when they are needed and are around, so can be our reserves

Nicky & Pete Tombs

Ann Ford

Sharon Wood

Jenny & Mick

Andrew & Christine Johnson

Pippa & David Boardman

Joan & David Hooper

I will keep all your names for next year and produce another rota once we establish a programme for the year. Just let me know if you want any changes made and if I have missed anyone from the list. Thanks to all of you, again.

Well that's it for now, I look forward to seeing you next in May at the Old Chapel Cellars tasting.

Updated programme of events below to take into account a visit to a new(ish) Wine Merchant in Fowey (November) and a new presenter to our Wine Group in August.

Regards

**Amanda**

## WINE APRECIATION PROGRAMME 2024



DATE	EVENT	COST & INFO
February 9	<b>Members' Tasting –</b> 5 members to present a wine of their choice costing £12 approx. We will taste a fizz, a white, two reds and a dessert wine. Some wines may be covered so that we can guess the wine!	<b>Arts Centre</b> 6.45pm start. <b>£15</b> includes room fee and food. Book before 31 <sup>st</sup> January. <b>WGFE24</b>
March 15	<b>“Call my Bluff” with wine tasting</b> by members Jenny, Mick & Shirley. Loosely based on a Call My Bluff type tasting, with the 3 members above also providing the food. Sounds like great fun!	Arts Centre, arrive 6.30pm for 6.45pm start. <b>£15pp</b> inc room fee, wines, food & fun! Book by February 28 <sup>th</sup> <b>WGMAR24</b>
April 12	<b>Carol Avery presents “Volcanic Wines”, Pentewan Sailing Club</b> arrival 6.45pm for 7pm start. Finish by 9.30pm but taxis for 9.45pm. Carol is back again by popular request and will once again lead us on a wonderful wine trip	<b>£27pp</b> including generous platters of food. Suggest taxi share to Pentewan. Bring your own tasting glasses.

		Book by March 10 <sup>th</sup> <b>WGAPR24</b>
May 9 Thursday	<p><b>Visit from Louisa, Old Chapel Cellars, Truro</b></p> <p><b>“Looking at Grape Varietals”</b></p> <p>Tasting 7 wines plus a glass on arrival accompanied by food bits. We look at pairs of wines with the same grape but under a different name. Presented by Louisa Fitzpatrick – a very popular and well informed presenter and great location for our members. A chance to order or purchase afterwards.</p>	<p><b>£30 pp</b></p> <p>tasting to include cheeses &amp; bread &amp; biscuits. Arts Centre 6.45pm start, finish around 9.30pm with clear up afterwards.</p> <p>Bkg ref <b>WGMAY</b></p>
Sunday, June 23 from midday	<p><b>Summer Garden Party chez Karen &amp; Chris Scott, 4 Tremena Road, St Austell</b></p> <p>Everyone brings their own wines plus a platter of food to share and enjoy in this delightful local garden. Liaise with Sue Osbrink re food to bring. A glass of fizz on arrival courtesy of the Wine Group. Thank you again, Karen &amp; Chris!</p>	<p><b>No cost</b></p> <p>just bring your own wines, glasses and platters of food to share</p>
July 12th Friday	<p><b>Visit to Ellis Wharton Wines</b></p> <p><b>“Mediterranean Wines” (without France and Spain but a quick stop in Alicante)</b></p> <p>We will visit and taste 6 wines from Italy Greece and a boutique producer in Alicante, Spain. All accompanied by cheese, meats, Da Bara focaccia and more foodie bits. Time to peruse the shop and make purchases.</p>	<p><b>£30 pp</b> for tasting to include delicious food. Arrive 6.30pm depart 9.30pm (Minibus return pp £14.50) Pick up 5.50pm Penrice or 6pm Arts Centre.</p> <p>Bkg ref <b>WGJUL</b></p>

<p>August 16</p>	<p><b>Kate from Cornish Wine Tasting presents Wines around The World.</b>  “Join Kate from “Cornish wine tasting” as she hosts an evening of Wines from around The World, Be taken on a journey of discovery looking at some lesser known grape varieties and unique wine regions. 6 wines to taste, with the usual food.</p> <p><b>Chris &amp; Chrissie Wright to do the food, thank you!</b></p>	<p><b>Arts Cente</b>  <b>6.45pm start</b>  <b>£30pp 6 wines and food</b></p> <p><b>Bkg ref</b>  <b>WGAUG</b></p>
<p>September 20</p>	<p><b>Sebastien from Wadebridge Wines presents Wines from New Zealand.</b> He will cover regions and their specialities moving top to bottom of NZ, tasting 6 exquisite examples along the way. He will have wines available to buy on the night.</p> <p><b>Judith Newell to do the food, thank you!</b></p>	<p><b>Arts Centre</b>  <b>6.45pm start.</b>  <b>£28pp to include 6 wines and food.</b></p> <p><b>Bkg ref WGSEP</b></p>
<p>October 18</p>	<p><b>Derek (Del) Crookes from Kernowine “Not so usual wines from South America”</b>  A second visit from Del, who wants to show us a selection of wines from S America we may not know.</p> <p><b>Elaine Burgess to do the food, thank you!</b></p>	<p>Arts Centre  6.30pm arrival for 6.45pm start.  <b>£26pp</b> to include wines, food and room hire.  <b>Bkg ref</b>  <b>WGOCT</b></p>
<p>November 15</p>	<p><b>Visit to John’s of Fowey,</b> a reasonably new Wine Merchant. Tasting with supplier on site. Subject and cost tba</p>	<p>Cost tba pp plus minibus to Fowey.</p>

December 20	<b>Christmas Event</b> , Arts Centre Format to be decided our group of Christmas Elves.  I believe our super Elves will be planning another exciting Christmas extravaganza tasting some interesting wines. More info to follow.	<b>£tbc pp</b> to include room fee and wines.
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